

"Another prophet?"

CHURCH

LUKE 4

Text: Luke 4:22b & 24. "Is not this Joseph's son?" "And he said,
"Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country."

The young man came back to his hometown and on Sunday morning he went to ~~his~~ ^{THE} church ~~that~~ he had attended all of his life. Since he had become somewhat of an authority in some subjects, he was asked to speak in the service. He stood on the chancel and read from the Old Testament some words of one of the prophets. Then he closed the Bible and told the congregation that this prophecy was being carried out in the present age.

The members of the congregation had known this young man from infancy, and they knew that he came from a poor uneducated family and that somehow he had managed to educate himself. Now here he was a sort of expert in his field and they marveled at the wisdom with which he spoke.

Then he went on, he told them that they did not appreciate his authority, because he had come from that town, and after all, what could he possibly become after having such meager beginnings!

He told them that there had been injustices committed in the hometown and the surrounding area. He spoke of the things that needed to be corrected. With each new charge that he laid at their doorstep the people in the congregation became more angry until finally they escorted him from the church.

In case you are wondering where this happened and who the young man was, you can find it recorded in Mark's gospel the beginning of the 6th chapter and in Luke's gospel the beginning of the 4th chapter. Luke goes into a little more detail with his narrative.

Here we have not only a nice little story, but some

very interesting background as well.

In Luke we read that he went to the Synagogue as was his custom on the Sabbath day. To those who say that Jesus was not a follower of organized religion this should prove that he was not only an attender of the Synagogue services, but was probably a member as well. I believe this point, "as was his custom," has a great deal of significance to it. We hear ~~a lot of people make~~ ^{MAKE QUITE OFTEN} the remark today, 'I can get just as much out of watching a religious service on television as I ^{can} ~~could~~ out of going to church.' Or, "I don't need to go to church I can be just a religious outside of it." ~~This is actually very common~~

~~thinking~~ There is some merit in what some people say along these lines, but it is not completely true. The church as it is today causes some problems with some people. They perhaps go to church and are not getting anything out of it because in many cases the church has become a sounding board for all types of social problems and ills. Too many pulpits are being used to expound human thoughts and theories and too little of the word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. I can agree with this and I am sure you can too.

But look back to the Synagogue of the time of Christ. Let's ask ~~whether~~ whether the Synagogue then was one of complete adherence to the expounding of the love of God? It couldn't have been. During the week preceeding the death of Christ we are aware that he went to the Synagogue and threw out those who sold and bargained there. This is not an isolated example of what was going on ~~there~~. This was happening in every Synagogue throughout Palestine. The Scribes and the Pharisees were so intent on making new laws to fulfill the old one, that the use of the Synagogue for worship was secondary.

But did Jesus ever say that he was going to stay outside of the organized church because there were too many hypocrites there?

We never see it recorded anywhere and I am sure that had he felt this way and expressed it, someone would have picked it up and written about it.

Instead we see a man who takes the scribes and pharisees to task for their actions. Time and again he attacked them on their concern for the letter of the law and their lack of concern for the individual. He wanted to work at the task of changing the church from within. Instead of standing on the outside and criticizing it, he was ~~working at it from within.~~ TRYING TO WORK CHANGING IT & RENEWING IT.

I read an interesting interview of a man who calls himself a humanist. He belongs to an organization in Pittsburgh that is made up of people who are atheists and humanists. ~~THEY DO NOT~~ ~~accept~~ ~~of~~ ~~Christianity~~ ~~and~~ ~~they~~ Some of them believe in a supreme being of some sort. But their main theme in life is that of trusting to humanity for help. This life is the important thing and there is nothing beyond this life.

The man who was interviewed spoke of the decline of the churches. What he stated about the churches is very sadly true, but his closing statement was one that shows the futility of life as he lives it. ~~He stated, "Even today"~~ Quote on question asked by interviewer. (William McHolland humanism)

This shows the utter futility of his beliefs. To the Christian life is indeed, "a haunting, awful thing," but there is hope to be found in Christ. This is actually what Christ himself was fighting. He was trying to make the Jewish religion of his day see the error of their ways, and to make it more relevant. But he was doing it from within, or trying to do it from within. It was only when he was forced out because the leaders and some of the people would not listen that he worked completely on the outside.

The conclusion of this story tells us that after he had finished speaking, "all in the Synagogue were filled with wrath and they rose up and put him out of the city," and they wanted to throw him off the cliff, but he passed through them. This shows us the actions of those who will not hear or listen to the truth.

How many times do we hear in our own day, the words of someone who has gone astray saying, "if only I had listened." ? Unfortunately, many times we do not listen to the truth. We want to shut it out, to still it and to close our ears from it. Many times we read of young people who would not listen to their parents, regretfully saying they wished they had heeded their parents advice. An old song of many, many years ago stated the simple truth that, "Mother's prayers have followed me." How many times do you suppose mothers, as well as fathers and grandparents ^{who} have been unable to make their young loved ones see what is right ~~and they~~ have resorted to prayer as the only means by which to help them? How often do you think our loved ones pray for us and for the only help possible for us?

This is one area we do not know too much about, but I am sure that there are many prayers offered up on our behalf.

In Mark we read that because of the reception Jesus received in Nazareth in relation to this story, "He could do no mighty work there." This is true of individual lives and of churches that are devoid of the spirit of Jesus Christ. In a poem entitled, "The Church Today," written by Sir William Watson he writes, (illustration).

If this is the true tone of the church today, then those who are humanists, atheists, cynics unbelievers or whatever they wish to be called, can stand back and say that the church is dying and will disappear in a very short time. And they will be right. But my friends in a world filled with those who would destroy, and those who would stand

back and gloat that the church is done, finished and all but buried, there is ~~hope~~ still hope. There is still life. But it requires a new look at the church. A new look at the people within and what it is the church is trying to prove in a very confused and bewildered world.

The voice of God is calling its summons unto men;
As once he spoke in Zion, so now he speaks again:
Whom shall I send to succor my people in their need?
Whom shall I send to loosen the bonds of shame and greed?

I hear my people crying in ~~cottages~~ cot and mine and slum;
No field or mart is silent, no city street is dumb.
I see my people falling in darkness and despair.
Whom shall I send to shatter the fetters which they bear?

We heed O Lord, thy summons, and answer here are we!
Send us upon thine errand, let us thy servants be.
Our strength is dust and ashes, our years a passing hour;
But thou canst use our weakness to magnify thy power.

From ease and plenty save us; from pride of place absolve;
Purge us of low desire; lift us to high resolve;
Take us, and make us holy; teach us thy will and way.
Speak, and behold! we answer; command, and we obey.

These words John Holmes wrote in a hymn that deals with brotherhood. The voice of God is still calling today as it called in and through the life of Jesus Christ. The world is ~~waiting~~ waiting to see what the church will do. We are the church, the people who belong to it. What we do about the conditions of the world around us is what the church will either be judged as doing or of leaving undone. May our prayer be, "Take us and make us holy; teach us thy will and way. Speak, and, behold we answer! command and we obey."

TRINITY CHURCH--THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Ralph C. Link, Pastor
Trinity Church, New Bloomfield 9:00 A.M.
Christ Church, Duncannon 10:30 A.M.

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP January 16, 1972

The Organ Prelude
*The Hymn of Praise 31
*The Call to Worship
*The Prayer of Confession (Unison)

O holy Father, we confess that both as individuals and as a Church, we have been too much preoccupied with ourselves and too little concerned for the welfare of others. Thou hast taught us to help to bear the burdens of our brethren in Christ; but often we have failed to support the weak, to help the needy, and to encourage the disheartened. Thou hast commanded us to let our light shine out in the world; but we have failed to bear witness to Christ before men, and to seek them that are lost. For all our disobedience, carelessness, and lovelessness, we implore thy forgiveness. Cleanse us from our sin, and so strengthen and assist us by thy grace that we may henceforth fulfill the law of Christ; for his dear sake. Amen.

*The Kyrie
*The Assurance of Pardon
The Scripture----Isaiah 61:1-6
Acts 10:34-43

*The Gloria Patri
The Anthem (Trinity)
The Pastoral Prayer
The Announcements
The Receiving of Tithes and Offerings
*The Doxology
*The Offering Prayer and Lord's Prayer
The Hymn of Meditation 299
The Sermon----"Another Prophet?"

The Sermon Prayer
*The Hymn of Response 289
*The Benediction
*The Threefold Amen
*The Postlude

*Congregation Stands

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

The joint consistory meeting will be held
Tues. Jan. 18th at 7:30 PM at Trinity Church.

CHRIST CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Men's Brotherhood will have the worship
service Sunday Jan. 23rd at 2:00 PM at the
Kinkora Home.

Congregational dinner Tues. Jan. 25th at
6:30 PM.

RUTH MORRIS ASTORIA HOSPITAL

RICHARD FOX HARBURG









Ralph C. Link
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Sarver, Pa. 16055
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.